

Message Text

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15

ACTION NEA-10

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R 220425Z AUG 75

FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABJD

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1670

INFO AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMCONSUL TORONTO

AMCONSUL LAHORE

AMCONSUL KARACHI

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE ISLAMABAD 7716

E.O. 11652

TAGS: PAK, PFOR, SGEN

SUBJ: SHRINERS ACCUSED OF ANTI-ISLAMIC BIAS

SUMMARY: PUBLICITY GIVEN TO RECENT SHRINERS CONVENTION IN TORONTO, AND RESULTANT CHARGES IN PAKISTAN PRESS THAT SHRINERS NOMENCLATURE USING ISLAMIC HOLY PLACES AND LEADERS PROVES IT IS ANTI-ISLAMIC ORGANIZATION, HAS CAUSED MINOR FLURRY IN ISLAMABAD. POL COUNS WAS CALLED TO MFA BY DIRECTOR GENERAL (AMERICAS), KHURSHID HYDER, WHO NOTED MINISTER OF RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS NIAZI HAD ASKED MFA TO MAKE OFFICIAL INQUIRY. NIAZI ALSO REQUESTED THIS MATTER BE BROUGHT TO ATTENTION OF HIGHEST LEVELS IN U.S. EMBASSY. POL COUNS LEFT SHORT, FACTUAL AIDE MEMOIRE NOTING NON-GOVERNMENTAL NATURE AND SOCIAL WELFARE GOALS OF SHRINERS. HE ADDED AMBASSADOR WAS AWARE OF GOP CONCERN AND SUGGESTED MFA MAY WISH TO SO INFORM MINISTER NIAZI. HYDER MADE "PERSONAL" SUGGESTION THAT EMBASSY MAY WANT TO RELEASE PRESS NOTE STATING SHRINERS IS PRIVATE GROUP WITH NO ANTI-ISLAMIC BIAS. EMBASSY DOES NOT BELIEVE PRESS RELEASE ADVISABLE AND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WILL SO INFORM HYDER. END SUMMARY.

1. RECENT SHRINERS CONVENTION HELD IN TORONTO AND THE GROUP'S USE OF NAMES OF ISLAMIC HOLY PLACES, SACRED BOOKS, AND IMAMS IN ITS ORGANIZATIONAL HEIRARCHY HAVE CAUSED MINOR FLURRY IN ISLAMABAD. ARTICLE APPEARED IN VERNACULAR PRESS QUOTING TORONTO STAR STORY ON SHRINERS CONVENTION ACCOMPANIED BY PHOTOS OF SHRINERS IN RESPLENDANT ORGANIZATIONAL GARB COMPLETE WITH HATS EMBLAZONED WITH NAMES RANGING FROM AL-KORAN TO AL-MOHAMMAD. LOCAL ARTICLE CLAIMED OBJECT OF SHRINERS IS TO AFFRONT RELIGIOUS SENSIBILITIES OF MUSLIMS AND RIDICULE ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS. ISSUE HAS BEEN SEIZED BY MAULANA KAUSAR NIAZI, FEDERAL MINISTER FOR RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS WHO SENT FORMAL NOTE ASKING MFA TO MAKE OFFICIAL INQUIRIES. EMBASSY HAS NOT YET BEEN MAJOR TARGET OF CAMPAIGN AND CANADIANS ARE TAKING MOST OF HEAT SINCE TORONTO WAS VENUE FOR CONVENTION.

2. POL COUNS CALLED ON KHURSHID HYDER - DIRECTOR GENERAL (AMERICAS) - AT LATTER'S REQUEST AUGUST 20 TO FOLLOW UP HER EARLIER PHONE CALL ON ISSUE. MRS. HYDER NOTED THAT OVER 8,000 PAKISTANIS LIVE IN TORONTO AND THE COMMUNITY IS UPSET BY ACTIVITIES OF SHRINERS. THEY HAVE WRITTEN TO PAKISTANI PRESS, MFA AND MINISTRY FOR RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS COMPLAINING ABOUT GROUP'S ACTIONS. MRS. HYDER REFERRED TO OFFICIAL INQUIRY FROM NIAZI AND ADDED HE HAD ASKED THAT THIS MATTER BE BROUGHT TO THE ATTENTION OF HIGHEST LEVELS IN U.S. EMBASSY. SHE ADDED THAT CANADIAN AMBASSADOR HAD SEEN HER EARLIER AT HER REQUEST. HE HAD NOTED HIS EMBASSY HAS RECEIVED NUMEROUS CABLES FROM PAKISTANIS OBJECTING TO SHRINERS' NOMENCLATURE AND HE HAD ALSO MET WITH A DELEGATION OF CONCERNED PAKISTANIS. THE AMBASSADOR POINTED OUT THE SHRINERS IS NOT REGISTERED AS A CANADIAN ORGANIZATION, AND IT

WAS ONLY FORTUITOUS THAT CONVENTION WAS HELD IN CANADA RATHER THAN ELSEWHERE.

3. HYDER MADE TWO SUGGESTIONS TO POL COUNS WHICH SHE CHARACTERIZED AS PERSONAL IN NATURE AND ONLY FOR LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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EMBASSY'S CONSIDERATION. SHE SAID PERHAPS DEPARTMENT SHOULD APPROACH SHRINERS, NOTING CONCERN IN PAKISTAN AND SUGGESTING THEY MAY WISH TO CONSIDER CHANGING NAMES USED IN ORGANIZATION. SHE ALSO SUGGESTED US AND CANADIAN EMBASSIES MAY WISH TO ISSUE SEPARATE PRESS RELEASES STATING SHRINERS IS A PHILANTHROPIC, COMPLETELY PRIVATE ORGANIZATION WITH NO ANTI-ISLAMIC MOTIVATIONS.

4. POL COUNS LEFT SHORT, FACTUAL AIDE MEMOIRE NOTING SHRINERS HAS NO CONNECTION WITH USG AND THAT ORGANIZATION STATES IT IS SOCIAL WELFARE GROUP BASED UPON FUNDAMENTALS OF RELIGION HELD IN COMMON BY ALL MEN. NOTE ADDED THAT ORGANIZATION PLACES PARTICULAR STRESS ON BENEVOLENT ACTIVITIES, SUCH AS HOSPITAL FOR CRIPPLED CHILDREN. HE TOLD MRS. HYDER THIS ISSUE HAD BEEN DISCUSSED WITH THE AMBASSADOR WHO WAS AWARE OF CONCERN FELT WITHIN GOP. SHE MAY CONSEQUENTLY, IF SHE WISHES, INFORM MINISTER FOR RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS THAT ISSUE HAS BEEN BROUGHT TO ATTENTION OF HIGHEST LEVELS IN EMBASSY. IN RESPONSE TO HYDER'S SUGGESTIONS, POL COUNS SAID HE WOULD DISCUSS QUESTION OF PRESS RELEASE WITHIN EMBASSY AND WOULD INFORM HER OF OUR DECISION.

5. EMBASSY DOES NOT PLAN TO ISSUE PRESS RELEASE AS SUGGESTED BY MRS. HYDER. THE ISSUE HAS ATTRACTED ONLY LIMITED INTEREST AMONG GENERAL POPULACE SO FAR AND SUCH A RELEASE COULD GIVE IT UNWARRANTED ATTENTION. ALSO, EMBASSY DOES NOT THINK IT ADVISABLE TO GIVE THIS MATTER PATINA OF PUBLIC, OFFICIAL USG INTEREST WHICH WOULD NATURALLY OCCUR AS RESULT OF PRESS RELEASE. SUCH ACTION COULD ONLY SEVE TO PUBLICLY TIE USG TO ISSUE TO EVEN GREATER EXTENT THAN NOW EXISTS. WE PLAN TO INFORM MRS. HYDER WE DO NOT INTEND ISSUE RELEASE.

6. DEPARTMENT MAY WISH TO INFORM SHRINER ORGANIZATON OF THE REACTION IN PAKISTAN TO TORONTO STAR STORY AND RESULTANT ANTI-ISLAMIC INTERPRETATION SO THEY ARE AWARE OF ISSUE.
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